

MAY 23 1960

ROCK ISLAND - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP
ARGUS

Circ.: e. 25,612

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Propaganda War Shifts

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The Russians take their propaganda war to the United Nations today in an effort to obtain denunciation by the Security Council of the American U-2's flight over Russia.

The U.S. delegate, Henry Cabot Lodge, is said to be armed with records of Russian spies convicted in the United States.

The Russians may try to make a distinction, however, between espionage agents sent to another country and individuals who sold out their own country, as was the case of the Americans who turned traitor on Russian persuasion. The Russians can argue that they bear no responsibility for the conduct of American traitors.

The most notable example of a Russian spy convicted in America was Col. Rudolph Abel, the first foreign agent ever tried for espionage in peacetime in this country. He was convicted in 1957 and is serving a 30-year sentence. The most notable example of espionage by Russians was the Canadian spy ring which was exposed in 1946.

Why not trade Abel for Powers?

But the Russians, even when caught red-handed, are trained never to confess their crimes. The Soviet government may deny that any of those convicted individuals were actually spies. On the other hand, the U-2 pilot, Francis Powers, admitted his espionage mission. And contrary to first reports, this was precisely what he was supposed to do, according to George V. Allen, director of the U.S. Information Agency. This was certainly a new twist in espionage. What was the purpose of it?

But that is not the point. The fact is that the record shows that Russia has engaged in far more espionage than the United States, and that the civilized world is well aware of this fact, but that the Russians will probably try to lie their way out of it.

Since their propaganda is based largely on lies, they are not going to let moral compunction persuade them to tell the truth in this espionage argument.

Of course, the Russians can hardly believe that any pronouncement of the U.N. is going to change the course of history. They remember well how they shrugged off its condemnation of their behavior in Hungary—a million times more venal than the U.S. sending of an espionage plane over Russia.

But the Russians have used the U.N. from the outset as a forum for their propaganda. Their latest appeal to the U.N. only means that they are stepping up their propaganda war.